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Atari Online News, Etc.
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~ Penn State Cyberattack! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Verizon To Buy AOL!
~ 'Venom' Vulnerability! ~ Win10: Last Major Ver ~ 'Symphony" Successor!
~ Divinity Goes Console! ~ Home Routers Hijacked! ~ Win10 Not for Pirates!

~ Multiple Win10 Editions ~ Peeing Robot Spoils It ~ Blizzard Bans Wow'ers!

-* Win10: Last Major Version! *-
-* U.S. Is Running Out of IP Addresses *-
-* FCC Says No to Net Neutrality Delay Request *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

It's been just over two years since the Boston Marathon bombing by the Tsarnaev brothers. Today, the jury in that case, after deliberating for three days, determined that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev will receive the death penalty rather than spend the rest of his life in prison with no chance for parole.

I happen to live rather close to Boston; and I have been following the events of this case since that fateful day when innocent people were killed and/or severely injured. Equally ill-fated was the young MIT police officer who was assassinated while sitting in his police car.

A few weeks ago, that jury found Tsarnaev guilty on all charges against him. That same jury was convened to determine his fate. They heard lots of testimony from witnesses, victims, and victims' families. They also heard from law enforcement officials and other experts. From my point of view, they shrugged off the "testimony" from Tsarnaev's family members talking about his broken family, how much of a "good kid" he was, and the like. They blew off the theory that he was young, and heavily influenced by his older brother. The jury even negated the "expert" testimony from one of the country's most influential anti-death penalty advocates, Sister Helen Prejean. In the end, the jury didn't sway in their conviction that Tsarnaev was a cold-hearted terrorist who deserved to die for his heinous crimes. I happen to agree with their decision.

Massachusetts is not known for its support for the death penalty - far from it, in fact. But, because this was being conducted in a federal court, Massachusetts' stance on the subject didn't matter. The concern, however, was could these twelve Massachusetts citizens decide that the defendant's crimes warranted the death penalty? Following the guidelines set forth by the law, they were able to reach the decision that Tsarnaev's actions were punishable by death. Justice will be served. Boston Strong!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Castlevania' Creator Just Funded A 'Symphony

see if the same holds true of last year's breakout role-playing game Divinity: Original Sin in the form of an Enhanced Edition. The decidedly old-school RPG's getting a revamped interface, split-screen couch co-op and full-on voice work throughout for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One. The tweaks don't stop there either, as it's also getting some new quests among others along with tweaks to the combat system (likely to accommodate gamepads) and story.

If you were worried about the Kickstarted fantasy game abandoning its PC roots for the console peasants, backers get access to Enhanced Edition as part of a free update across Linux, Mac, SteamOS and Windows. When it all happens isn't immediately clear, but developer Larian Studios teases more info will come at next month's Electronics Entertainment Expo.

Nintendo World Championships To Return After 25 Years

After a 25-year hiatus, the Nintendo World Championships will return at this year's E3, the game maker announced.

"For the first time in 25 years, some of Nintendo's biggest fans will get to go head-to-head in a gaming showdown for the ages. Join a worldwide audience by watching the live stream on Sunday, June 14," the company said on its E3 website. Qualifying competitions will begin on May 30; Nintendo promised more details about how to enter soon.

In a teaser video for the event (below), Nintendo president and COO Reggie Fils-Aime gives up his job to "train" for the big event by playing a number of classic games, with the help of some familiar faces.

As IGN, PCMag's sister site, noted, the Nintendo World Championships in 1990 were a three-day event in Dallas that signaled the start of a 30-city promotional tour throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Fans played games like Chip & Dale's Rescue Rangers, Astyanax, Batman, Robocop, and Super Mario Bros. 3. In the pre-Internet era, Nintendo "Game Counselors" were also on hand to answer obscure questions from super gamers, IGN said.

Last year, an extremely rare Nintendo World Championships game cartridge appeared on eBay and sold for \$100,000, but the buyer eventually backed out. Manufactured for the 1990 competition, the cartridge was one of 116 total, while only 90 official gray carts were given out to finalists.

Nintendo's big E3 press conference, meanwhile, is scheduled for 9 a.m. PT on Tuesday, June 16, where the company will provide details on upcoming games and more. Nintendo will also have a presence on the show floor via its "Treehouse" through June 18.

Game Hacker Stripped, Shamed and Given In-game Death Sentence

Usually, when you cheat in an MMO it doesn't end well.

Your character winds up getting banned by the administrators, and that's it for you, you bringer of malfeasance - badda bing, badda boom, you're

outta here.

But that was apparently not a severe enough fate for the one Guild Wars 2 player who called him/herself "DarkSide".

No, instead of simply banning the player for gaming sins that spanned weeks and included teleporting, doling out massive damage, surviving coordinated attacks by other players and dominating player-versus-player combat, the game's creator got medieval on DarkSide's ass, sentencing the character to in-game execution.

In order to spur Guild Wars' creator ArenaNet into dealing with the troublemaker, players had been gathering videos of DarkSide's antics, such as this one, and posting them onto YouTube.

When ArenaNet finally took action against the cheater, it was done with both flair and public humiliation.

After administrators took over his account, DarkSide was stripped down to his underwear and forced to jump off a high bridge before all of the characters associated with his account were deleted.

The execution was recorded for posterity: RIP DarkSide, indeed, splat!

Of course, after the character had been tracked down and forced to leap to his death, he was also banned, said game security lead Chris Cleary.

ArenaNet hasn't revealed just exactly how the player behind DarkSide has exploited the game or whether it's patched any vulnerabilities that he or she may have used to torment other players.

World of Warcraft Bans A Large Number of Players

Maybe think twice before using that cheat code.

Blizzard Entertainment has banned a large number of World of Warcraft accounts after finding that they were using bots, or third-party programs that automate gameplay according to a company post. The number of banned accounts was not revealed in Blizzard's post, but a widely cited screenshot from a user's chat with a game master indicates that more than 100,000 accounts were banned for six months. World of Warcraft has an estimated 7.1 million active subscribers.

In addition to an explanation of the ban, Blizzard encouraged World of Warcraft players to report accounts they suspected of cheating.

We're committed to providing an equal and fair playing field for everyone in World of Warcraft, and will continue to take action against those found in violation of our Terms of Use, the company post read. Cheating of any form will not be tolerated.

The game's community manager, Micah Whipple, tweeted a response to the cheating from his World of Warcraft persona account:

Botting is defined as automation of any action, not just character movement. If a program is pressing keys for you, you've violated the ToU.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online      -          Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Atari: "By God, We're Going To Do This Right"

For a great many people, the words "videogames" and "Nintendo" are interchangeable, one of those rare examples of brand ubiquity only made possible by just the right products at just the right time. But there is another, Back To The Future-esque timeline in which that honour belongs to Atari, in which the great crash of 1983 never happened, and Nolan Bushnell's company went on to define the games industry in the same way that Microsoft did for home computers.

In this timeline, however, it's possible for an Atari console to be the first you ever played, and yet scarcely be aware that the company still exists at all. Indeed, it came perilously close to that exact fate, filing for bankruptcy at the start of 2013 before eventually finding a path back out before the close of the same year. Todd Shallbetter joined Atari in 2005, back when it employed 490 people in its New York City office alone, and he remained with the company through the "very tough patch" that brought the entire organisation to its knees.

"It's an interesting challenge with any game company when you reach a certain size and you have a lot of in-house development," he says, sitting in front of a bank of screens showcasing Atari's new product line-up. "You're really feeding this giant machine, especially in the challenging retail environment that we all saw happen."

"We're contracting out all of our dev work and a lot of other functions. We think it's a model that works"

"The swift change and the decline of a lot of that great retail marketplace that we enjoyed really affected us. We weren't scaled properly, so we had to take a bite."

Of course, implicit in that "bite" were a huge number of lost jobs and stalled careers. The Atari that emerged on the other side shared little with the vast corporation that failed to adapt to the changing times. The core team were all veterans of the company, including Fred Chesnais, who returned as majority shareholder and CEO. But that core team, Shallbetter says, was 11 people in a small office in New York City, each one expert in an essential aspect of running a publishing business.

"We're super nimble," he says, insisting that the extreme economy of Atari's workforce is by design rather than necessity. "It's an executive production model, where we're contracting out all of our dev work and a lot of other functions. We think it's a model that works."

"I dare say that every single person who sits in a seat in that office should be in that seat. We all touch every product. We aren't doing things in silos, where there's nine producers on a project. That model

has proven to be outdated and inefficient and not high yield.

"'High yield' is really a catch-phrase within our organisation. We look for high yield output out of everybody, and in the processes that we generate. We're about really getting the most out of as little as we can. Scalability is absolutely key. We know what's happened to a bunch of our top-heavy peers. We've seen it. I won't name names, but I don't think I need to. I think we all know."

However, the company has retained its scale in one crucial area: the vast library of intellectual properties it amassed over 40 years of making and publishing games, the majority of which emerged from the bankruptcy along with the its drastically reduced workforce. That IP stable includes some of the most famous brands in the history of the industry. The question now is how best to make use of them, and Atari's future prosperity will likely depend on these early bets being the right ones.

"We look for high yield output out of everybody, and in the processes that we generate. We're about really getting the most out of as little as we can"

A brief glance around the room - a well-appointed suite at San Francisco's W Hotel - suggests that the company's initial strategy isn't short of ambition, even if it does betray a certain lack of focus. There's *Alone in the Dark: Illumination*, which owes as much to *Resident Evil 4*'s ballistic action as the more cerebral puzzle-solving of the 1992 original. *Asteroids Outpost* reinterprets the 35 year-old arcade classic in the context of the on-trend sandbox survival genre. There's a new *Rollercoaster Tycoon* for mobile devices, alongside a gamified fitness app called *Atari Fit* and an "LGBT-themed" social sim called *Pridefest*, in which players can design and customise their own gay pride parade. Not represented here are the company's social casino products, its licensed apparel, or its return (in an as yet unspecified capacity) to the hardware business.

This broad sweep of ideas and genres and product categories neatly encapsulates one of Atari's more difficult problems, one hinted at in the opening paragraph of this article. There can be no doubting the fame of the Atari brand, but what does that really mean in 2015, after so many twist and turns and reinventions? My father played Atari games decades ago, I have played Atari games within the last five years, but there is an ocean of difference between our individual relationships with that brand and our expectations as consumers in general. Indeed, for younger demographics, it's safe to assume that there is little or no brand recognition at all. So who, exactly, is a *DayZ*-esque take on *Asteroids* actually for?

"We try to, of course, extend this brand goodwill to a really broad based mass-market audience," Shallbetter says. "To that point, a particular challenge for us is making our IPs and our games relevant to a newer audience. While many of these kids, or younger users, know about the brand, it doesn't necessarily resonate with them."

"It's a blessing that we have this fantastic catalogue of IPs, and we have some dynamic and really exciting studios working on these games to bring them up to speed with current technologies, current gameplay expectations. But it's also a curse in that we could make the greatest, earth-breaking, disruptive game in the world, then somebody'd say 'Yeah, but it's not *Asteroids*.' It's a first class problem, I think."

"We listen really closely. It's really all we do. The first step in any of

our meetings is always the community first. Let's get the web pages up now. Let's get the forums up now. Let's start this communication. With RollerCoaster Tycoon, the boards are alive right now. We're doing production blogs. We're communicating very consistently. People are up, they're posting, the community hub is open on Steam."

"We don't have to feed a beast of hundreds of employees in multiple locations as we've done in the past. We learned our lessons"

For both Asteroids Outpost and Alone in the Dark: Illumination - the most ambitious projects currently in development at Atari - that community engagement is a basic necessity. The former hit Steam Early Access at the end of March, and open lines of communication with your paying customers is a standard requirement of that model. At present, community reviews of the game are mixed, with the most common points of complaint being technical issues and a lack of things to do. Of course, these aren't exactly uncommon in Early Access releases, but the game's developer, Salty Studios, has become unresponsive in recent weeks.

At the time of writing, the studio's Steam community hub account has posted just twice in the month since April 7, and nothing at all since April 23. By contrast, in the month before that (starting March 7) it posted 37 times. The most recent thread on the game's discussion boards, dated May 8, asks if there is still work being done on the game at all, given an apparent lack of recent updates.

Alone in the Dark: Illumination presents a different problem. Atari made the game available for "pre-purchase" through Steam in October 2014, with a scheduled release promised before the end of the year. Right now, with June fast approaching and two beta weekends in the bag, the listed release date is still only a vague, "Early 2015." The game's developer, Pure FPS, is at least in contact with the community, reassuring its players in a post dated May 4 that a release date will be announced soon.

As anyone who has peered behind the curtain of game production will know, the reasons why a development team is unable to maintain persistent communication with an audience - or deliver on a planned release date, for that matter - are legion. Indeed, many of them could be related to the work itself, perhaps a symptom of redirecting limited resources to making a better product. But there is a clear disconnect between the ideals Shallbetter describes and the reality of how Atari's biggest and most important bets are taking shape.

One thing is certain: after such a long and fraught journey, the Atari brand may not have many more opportunities to trade on its legacy. Asteroids Outpost and Alone in the Dark: Illumination are ambitious games, tilting at the AAA market in which the company was once a key player. It is Atari's goal, Shallbetter says, to become that again, and these are the first, tentative steps in getting there.

"Yeah, we would like to sell hundreds of thousands of millions of copies of things, but I think that the way we're set up now we get a little bit more wiggle room. We don't have to feed a beast of hundreds of employees in multiple locations as we've done in the past. We learned our lessons, and we're afforded a very unique opportunity to keep this legacy moving forward.

"Under current management now, we're far more focused on creating robust and fulsome game experiences, complete game experiences. We're not going to try to half-step this. I know the CEO consistently says over and over,

'By God, we're going to do this right.' We live and breathe that."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

FCC Says No to Net Neutrality Delay Requests

The Federal Communications Commission will not delay the start of its recently enacted net neutrality rules after rejecting requests from two groups of broadband providers and industry trade groups that asked the agency to wait until several legal cases are resolved.

In a 19-page order denying the delay requests, the FCC said on May 8 that the groups asking for the delay had failed to meet the requirements that would have allowed the agency to put them off.

The opponents of the new rules object to the FCC's reclassification of the Internet as a public utility under Title II of the U.S. Communications Act, which gives the FCC the power to regulate Internet communications in the United States. Title II was originally intended to make sure that telephone companies provided service to anyone in their coverage area. The opponents argue that the FCC's reclassification of the Internet will harm consumers, stifle innovation and ultimately be bad for the Internet itself.

The reclassification and other rules changes are set to go into effect on June 12, unless blocked by the courts. The latest legal actions do not object to the other rule changes recently made by the FCC regarding net neutrality, including bans on slowing down access speeds for some users.

The opponents claim that the FCC's move to place broadband providers under the rules of Title II is arbitrary and capricious, and violates federal law.

The two groups that filed their delay requests are made up of the USTelecom Association, CTIA-The Wireless Association, AT&T, CenturyLink and the Wireless Internet Service Providers Association in one petition, and by the National Cable and Telecommunications Association and the American Cable Association in another petition.

In its response to the petitions, the FCC ruled that it rejected the requests because the applicants "failed to demonstrate that they are likely to succeed on the merits" of their case, since the FCC's classification of fixed and mobile telecommunications services falls "well within the Commission's statutory authority," according to the FCC's filing.

The FCC also rejected the claim by the petitioners that the FCC's actions will irreparably harm others as a result of the new rules.

The two groups had asked the FCC to delay the new rules in written filings on May 1, according to a May 2 report by Reuters. The groups argued that the FCC's move to reclassify broadband Internet as a more heavily regulated telecommunications service will harm consumers and businesses.

The legal battle over the new net neutrality rules is likely to go on for some time.

In March and April, the FCC was hit with six earlier petitions opposing the Title II reclassification of the Internet, according to earlier eWEEK reports. Those legal actions were filed separately by AT&T, the CTIA mobile trade association, the National Cable & Telecommunications Association (NCTA), the American Cable Association, USTelecom, a Washington-based telecommunications trade group and Alamo Broadband, an Elmdorf, Texas-based broadband provider.

In February, the FCC approved its new net neutrality rules by a 3-2 vote, with the key and most controversial change being that the agency will now begin to regulate the Internet as a public utility under Title II.

Many critics passionately opposed the move, arguing that the Internet did not need that kind of oversight and that it would ultimately stifle innovation and increase costs and hassle for consumers. The FCC countered that the new regulations would "set sustainable rules of the roads that will protect free expression and innovation on the Internet and promote investment in the nation's broadband networks," according to an earlier eWEEK report. Two prior attempts by the FCC to set rules for Internet use into the future were struck down by courts, but the latest attempt resolves the legal issues that eventually undermined those attempts, the agency said. Critics vehemently disagree with that analysis.

The new FCC rules also include key provisions that broadband providers cannot block access to legal content, applications and services, nor can they "throttle," or slow up, access to lawful Internet traffic, according to the FCC. Also prohibited under the new rules is paid prioritization in which broadband providers could favor some lawful Internet traffic over other lawful traffic in exchange for extra payments, essentially prohibiting so-called fast lanes to the highest bidders.

The issue of net neutrality has been a hotbed for several years, with proponents and opponents arguing their positions and bashing the opposition verbally in public forums and discussions.

Not Bigger Than Heartbleed But Venom Vulnerability Could Have Opened Door To Cloud Kingdoms

It has a more terrifying name than Heartbleed, but don't panic, it's not going to cause as much trouble. The Venom vulnerability, as dubbed by security intelligence firm CrowdStrike after Virtualized Environment Neglected Operations Manipulation, resided in the virtual floppy drive code used by many computer virtualization platforms and therefore by many cloud providers, possibly including Amazon, though an advisory said its customers were not affected, as well as Oracle, Citrix and Rackspace. The flawed code stems back to the Floppy Disk Controller (FDC) in QEMU, an open source hypervisor. The hypervisor controls virtual machines, which provide the computing resources individuals and businesses rent or buy

from cloud providers. The vulnerability, warned CrowdStrike, allowed for anyone with root access (the most privileged level of access on a server or client computer) on a virtual machine to reach out of that VM and into others sharing the same hypervisor.

As various hypervisors, including Amazon and Citrix favourite Xen, and KVM, the default hypervisor in widely-deployed OpenStack clouds, such as those run by HP and Rackspace, incorporated that QEMU code, they may have been left vulnerable. In theory, criminal hackers could have bought space on cloud servers run by those companies, exploited Venom and started poking around other people's rented space. It would, if it had ever occurred, amounted to a cloud-based nightmare.

But CrowdStrike and partners, including noted security expert and co-founder of White Ops Dan Kaminsky, organised a disclosure process that has led to patches rolling out today. Both the QEMU Project and the Xen Project delivered their anti-Venom code today, whilst ZDNet has reported an Oracle patch was coming. Open source giant Red Hat issued an advisory guiding users to the fixes, noting its OpenStack and Enterprise offerings were affected. Citrix said it was looking into the issue. That would indicate other OpenStack partners are affected, though HP had responded to requests for comment at the time of publication.

How Enlightened Finance Can Restore Faith in Capitalism: Q&A With John Taft
A Rackspace spokesperson said: Regarding VENOM specifically, earlier this week, Rackspace was notified of a potential hypervisor vulnerability that affects a portion of our Cloud Servers fleet. We have applied the appropriate patch to our infrastructure and are working with customers to fully remediate this vulnerability.

Venom is an interesting bug, though not unprecedented and no exploits have been seen in the wild, neither have any guest-to-host escapes against a provider been seen before, noted Zach Lanier, researcher at security provider Accuvant Labs, who only gave it a moderate severity rating.

Such virtual machine escapes have been demonstrated before. But the ultimate message here is for cloud providers and users, Kaminsky told FORBES. Providers need to be aware of all the code they have inherited, given the flawed software was released 11 years ago, and users might want to consider paying extra to separate their virtual machines from others to avoid such issues in the future, warning that attackers wanting to exploit Venom could just buy their way to the root privileges required.

Kaminsky noted the long tail of problems associated with Heartbleed, a bug which affected a large number of websites due to the widespread use of the broken encryption library OpenSSL, won't be seen with Venom. That's because 95 per cent of the risk is held by the various cloud and virtual private server (VPS) providers affected who will likely act fast.

Everyone affected should patch as soon as possible, given the high chance of a public exploit being released soon, added Tod Beardsley, research manager at Rapid7. This circumstance leads me to believe that VENOM is an interesting bug to the sorts of people who do exploit research for a living. To be able to break out of a guest OS to a host OS is a rare and powerful ability, and such bugs are uncommon. Given this incentive of interestingness, I would expect to see a public proof of concept exploit appear sooner rather than later.

In the meantime, Microsoft and VMware will be pretty smug their

hypervisors, the two leaders alongside KVM and Xen, weren't infected with Venom.

Cyberattack on Penn State College Said To Have Come from China

Pennsylvania State University said on Friday that two cyberattacks at its College of Engineering, including one in 2012 that originated in China, compromised servers containing information on about 18,000 people.

Penn State, a major developer of technology for the U.S. Navy, said there was no evidence that research or personal data such as social security or credit card numbers had been stolen.

Cybersecurity firm Mandiant has confirmed that at least one of the two attacks was carried out by a "threat actor" based in China, Penn State said.

The source of the other attack is still being investigated.

Penn State was alerted about a breach by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in November, Penn State executive vice president Nicholas Jones said in a statement.

Mandiant, the forensic unit of FireEye Inc., discovered the 2012 breach during the investigation.

Penn State's Applied Research Laboratory spends more than \$100 million a year on research, with most of the funding coming from the U.S. Navy.

The university "fit the bill" as a high-value target, Daniel Ives, who covers cybersecurity for FBR Capital Markets.

Penn State said investigators found that a number of college-issued usernames and passwords had been compromised but only a small number had been used to access its network.

The university said the College of Engineering's computer network has been disconnected from the Internet and attempts were being made to recover all systems.

The outage is expected to last for several days and mostly affect the engineering college, Penn State said.

It is normal to keep systems running while breaches were being investigated. "Cyberattacks like this - sophisticated, difficult to detect and often linked to international threat actors - are the new normal," said Nick Bennett, senior manager at Mandiant.

"No company or organization is immune," he said.

The U.S. Is Running Out of Internet Addresses For Real This Time

There are a finite number of Internet protocol (IP) addresses, the numeric codes that identify devices and destinations for the Internet.

The current system, IPv4, has 4.3 billion (or 4.3×10^9) combinations to go around. This might all sound like boring Internet infrastructure stuff, but there's some serious drama going down, because the IPv4 addresses are almost all gone.

The Wall Street Journal reports that all remaining IP addresses in the United States will be claimed as of this summer. It's not a doomsday scenario Asia ran out in 2011 and Europe in 2012 but it's a reality that companies and developers will need to face now, if they haven't started already.

Concerns about IPv4 are nothing new. A replacement for IPv4, known as IPv6, was approved in 1998 and has been available and implementable ever since. It offers 3.4×10^{38} addresses (otherwise known as 340 trillion trillion trillion), so it's certainly a viable solution.

In a big systems transition, though, there are always groups that hold out as long as possible on a legacy system, either out of laziness or lack of economic incentive. You don't need to look any further than the transition away from Windows XP to find a good example.

Some companies have been diligently preparing. Facebook, for example, has switched 90 percent of its network to IPv6. In contrast, Microsoft spent \$7.5 million in 2011 buying 666,624 IPv4 addresses.

James Cowie, the chief scientist at Internet consulting firm Dyn, told the Journal, Enterprises that don't have a plan for what to do with this will have this brought up by their board.

A number of sites, including Test-IPv6.com, will tell you whether or not your Internet connection supports IPv6 and if you're currently able to browse the IPv6-only Web (almost everything is still compatible with both systems right now). As I wrote almost two years ago, "we're not exactly being blindsided by this issue."

How 40,000 Home Routers Got Hijacked (and How to Fix Them)

Wi-Fi routers may be easy to get up and running, but more than 40,000 small-office and home routers in 109 countries including the United States have fallen victim to hackers in attacks that could have been prevented with minimal effort. Internet security firm Incapsula reports that these compromised routers are being remotely operated to send massive amounts of traffic to websites to take them offline.

According to Incapsula, these orchestrated distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks have been going on since at least December, when researchers first found evidence that malware called MrBlack had infected routers and gathered them into a botnet, a network of infected Internet-connected machines secretly working together.

This botnet of weaponized routers is made up primarily of small & home office routers made by Ubiquiti, a San Jose, California-based network-hardware maker. The vast majority of these devices 40,269 in total so far were easily hijacked and infected because the default administrative login credentials the username and password provided by Ubiquiti and the other vendors involved had not been modified after purchase.

Ubiquiti, whose routers are not exactly ubiquitous in the United States, sees 70 percent of its revenue coming from developing countries, including Brazil, Thailand and Indonesia, as well as richer countries such as the Czech Republic. In an emailed statement sent to The Security Ledger, Incapsula said that the well-meaning goals of Ubiquiti may have erred on the side of negligence:

Ubiquiti Networks tried to do a good thing and bring Internet connection to Third World regions this year. Unfortunately, it's just been discovered that their routers are being actively exploited by hackers to field massive DDoS attacks, due to an overlooked exploit.

As any consumer who has ever set up his own router can attest, Ubiquiti is not the only manufacturer that does not require the user to put unique security settings in place. In fact, they are just one of many players operating by the same poor standards and practices.

The dangers of these routers being kept at system defaults go beyond being used as a pawn in a massive online blitz. Lax behavior puts personal information at risk as well. Owners of these exposed routers are vulnerable to having all communications monitored, and access granted to locally networked devices (such as Internet-connected security cameras and wireless printers).

The MrBlack malware isn't the only piece of software being used to usurp control of these routers—others have also been found infecting the routers in this particular botnet.

Fortunately, the solution is simple. Incapsula advises router owners to change their routers' default administrative login usernames and passwords. We at Tom's Guide also recommend more simple steps, including changing your router's name from its branded default (i.e. Netgear or Linksys) to something more obscure, and making sure your router's firmware is always up to date.

Verizon To Buy AOL in \$4.4 billion Mobile Video Push

Verizon Communications Inc is buying AOL Inc in a \$4.4 billion bet that a push into mobile video and targeted advertising can help the biggest U.S. telecommunications company find new growth avenues.

AOL and its properties, including the Huffington Post, TechCrunch and Engadget websites, would become a Verizon subsidiary, with AOL Chief Executive Officer Tim Armstrong staying in his job. The companies announced the deal on Tuesday.

Armstrong, who has been building up AOL's expertise in technology for placing text and video ads on mobile phones, sees mobile representing 80 percent of media consumption in coming years.

"If we are going to lead, we need to lead in mobile," Armstrong said in a memo to employees on Tuesday.

Global revenue from online video ads is forecast reaching \$19 billion by 2017 from about \$11 billion last year, cutting into television ad revenue, according to research firm IHS.

Verizon has over 100 million mobile consumers, content deals with the likes of the National Football League and "a meaningful strategy" in mobile video, Armstrong said.

It will need to buy telecommunications spectrum aggressively to accommodate rising mobile video traffic.

A man walks past the AOL logo at the company's office in New York For Wall Street, the deal is about the technology. "AOL's ad-tech offering has been driving its growth for some time now as the Internet business has faded," Dan Ridsdale, an analyst at Edison Investment Research, said in a note to clients. "This acquisition is aimed at enabling Verizon to maximize its revenues from mobile video.

Verizon, which last year bought the assets of OnCue, Intel's Internet-based TV platform, has been building a video streaming product to expand beyond slow-growth wireless services.

Verizon's \$50-per-share offer represents a premium of 17.4 percent to AOL's Monday close. AOL shares jumped 18.4 percent to \$50.41, while Dow Jones industrials component Verizon dipped 0.4 percent to \$49.63.

Armstrong told Reuters that talks between Verizon and AOL started last year. He met with Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam last July about how to further their partnership.

Armstrong said he has a multiyear commitment to stay with Verizon and run AOL as a separate division but declined to give further details.

The proposed acquisition was the latest example of how established telecommunications companies look to make deals to jump-start growth as mobile phone expansion slows. AT&T Inc , the second biggest U.S. telecom company, is also betting on video, agreeing to buy No. 1 U.S. satellite TV provider DirecTV , for \$48.5 billion. The deal is pending.

Advertising has become a major revenue stream for AOL, helped by the acquisition of automated advertising platforms such as Adap.tv. Demand for the real-time bidding platform that helps advertisers place video and display ads helped AOL beat sales and profit forecasts in its most recent quarter.

For AOL, the deal caps a years-long period of reinvention into an advertising technology company.

At the peak of the dot-com boom, AOL, whose dial-up Internet service once counted tens of millions of subscribers, used its elevated stock price to buy conglomerate Time Warner Inc in one of the most disastrous corporate mergers in history.

Spun off from Time Warner in 2009, AOL shares returned to the New York Stock Exchange, opening at \$27 in November 2009.

The Verizon bid values AOL below its January 2014 high of \$53.28. Shares have fallen in three of the last five quarters but are well above last year's low of \$32.31, leading some analysts to question whether Verizon was overpaying.

"There s the question of whether there is truly an advantage in owning all of this themselves," said Craig Moffett of media research firm

MoffettNathanson. "They are getting a hodgepodge of ancillary assets that may be as much a distraction as a benefit."

AOL has held talks to spin off Huffington Post as part of the Verizon deal, potentially valuing the news and commentary website at \$1 billion, technology news site Re/code reported Tuesday, citing sources.

Verizon viewed Huffington Post and the media brands as an attractive part of the AOL deal and has no immediate plans to sell them or spin them off, a source familiar with the matter said.

Verizon was showing signs of desperation as its core wireless business comes under pressure, Macquarie Capital analysts wrote in a note.

"We feel that Verizon paid a hefty price ... for what we believe to be an unproven programmatic ad-tech platform in the nascent video ad-tech space," they said.

Verizon said it expects the deal, which includes about \$300 million in AOL debt, to close this summer.

LionTree Advisors, Weil Gotshal & Manges and Guggenheim Partners advised Verizon. AOL's advisers were Allen & Co Llc and Wachtell Lipton Rosen & Katz.

Microsoft: These Are the Windows 10 Editions Coming Your Way

Microsoft is going public with its list of planned editions that it will make available for Windows 10 PCs, tablets, phones and embedded devices ahead of this summer's planned launch of the operating system.

Not counting the three embedded/Internet of Things (IoT) versions, there will be six Windows 10 editions: Home, Mobile, Pro, Enterprise, Education and Mobile Enterprise, according to a May 13 blog post from Windows Operating Systems Group Chief Terry Myerson.

When Microsoft introduced Windows 8 in 2012, there were four main Windows 8 editions (also sometimes referred to as SKUs): the Windows 8 consumer version; Windows 8 Pro for tech enthusiasts and business professionals; Windows RT, the version of Windows designed to run on ARM-based hardware; and Windows 8 Enterprise. Microsoft subsequently added a Windows 8 for Education version.

Microsoft is not yet disclosing the standalone pricing or the detailed feature set and licensing specifics of its Windows 10 editions.

As Microsoft said months ago, the company plans to make Windows 10 available as a free upgrade for consumers running Windows 7, Windows 8.x and Windows Phone 8.1 for the first year following availability of the Windows 10 operating system. Some business users—those who want Windows 10 Pro—also will qualify for the first-year-free deal, but enterprise customers will not, Microsoft execs have said.

Here's the Windows 10 lineup:

Windows 10 Home: The consumer-focused desktop edition. This will include the core Windows 10 features, such as the Edge browser, Continuum

tablet-mode for touch-capable devices; Cortana integration; free Photos, Maps, Mail, Calendar; Music and Video apps; and Windows Hello face-recognition/iris/fingerprint log-in for devices that support those technologies. On devices with screen sizes of 10.1 inches or less, users also will get Universal Office apps for free, once they are available.

Windows 10 Mobile: This is the version for Windows Phones and small Intel- and ARM-based tablets. This edition will include the core Windows 10 features; free Universal Office apps once they are available; and support for Continuum for Phone, allowing customers to use phones as PCs connected to larger screens (but only on new devices supporting certain screen resolutions).

Windows 10 Mobile Enterprise: This is a version of Windows 10 Mobile for volume licensing customers only. According to the blog post, this version incorporates the latest security and feature updates to Windows 10 once they are available. There s no word on whether users will be able to delay these updates in order to test/stagger their delivery, which is offered under Windows Update for Business.

Windows 10 Pro: A desktop version of Windows 10 for mobile workers, tech enthusiasts and other power users. This version is one of at least two the other being Windows 10 Enterprise that will allow users to opt for Windows Update for Business. Windows Update for Business will allow admins to opt to not receive all feature and security updates from Microsoft immediately after they are available.

Windows 10 Enterprise: This is the enterprise version of Windows 10 that is available to volume-licensing customers. This version is not part of Microsoft s first-year-free upgrade offer, but volume-licensing Software Assurance customers will be able to move to this version as part of their licensing terms. The Enterprise version customers get access to the Long Term Servicing branch of Windows 10 which allows them to opt to receive security fixes only and no new features as Microsoft rolls them out.

Windows 10 Education: This is the version for staff, administrators, students and teachers, and will be available through academic Volume Licensing. Microsoft officials say there will be paths for schools and students to upgrade from Windows 10 Home and Pro, but don t yet provide details on that front.

On the embedded-device front, Microsoft also is planning to deliver Windows 10 Enterprise and Windows 10 Mobile Enterprise versions of the operating system for handheld terminals, ATMs, point-of-sale and other similar devices, as well as a Windows 10 IoT Core for small footprint, low-cost devices.

Microsoft execs still aren t providing granular details about upgrades, such as whether those who go for the first-year-free deal with versions like Windows 10 Pro will have the option of delaying/staggering their feature and security updates, the way enterprise users can.

The Long Term Servicing branch being an enterprise level feature is the most interesting news here because that s the gateway for businesses who want to continue doing business as usual, said Wes Miller, an analyst with Directions on Microsoft.

(But Don't Worry - The Firm Is Just Changing The Way It Issues Updates)

Windows 10 will be the last major release for Microsoft's software, the firm has revealed.

However - it says it is not killing it off, but merely changing the way it updates the software.

Instead of giving giving major software releases numbers, it will simply issue smaller updates online.

Microsoft hopes to lure more people to use its new Windows 10 software by making it easy to use many of the same apps they're already using on Apple or Android phones.

Developer Jerry Nixon told a crowd at Microsoft's Ignite conference that 'Right now we're releasing Windows 10, and because Windows 10 is the last version of Windows, we're all still working on Windows 10'.

The company confirmed the plan in a statement issued to the Verge, saying there would continue to be a 'long future of Windows innovations'.

'Recent comments at Ignite about Windows 10 are reflective of the way Windows will be delivered as a service bringing new innovations and updates in an ongoing manner, with continuous value for our consumer and business customers,' a spokesperson said.

Recently the firm announced plans to lure more people to use its new Windows 10 software by making it easy to use many of the same apps they're already using on Apple or Android phones.

The move marks a radical shift in strategy for the world's biggest software company, which still dominates the personal computer market but has failed to get any real traction on tablets and phones, partly because of a lack of apps.

The company said at its annual Build conference that it will release new programming tools for software developers to rapidly adapt their Apple and Android apps to run on devices that use the new Windows 10 operating system coming late this year.

Microsoft also announced a new name for the web browser that it plans to offer with Windows 10.

The company promises its new 'Edge' browser is faster and more useful than the Internet Explorer that Microsoft has offered for the last 20 years.

Internet Explorer, which was first called Windows Internet Explorer, was first released as part of the add-on package Plus! for Windows 95 in 1995.

Internet Explorer was one of the most widely used web browsers, attaining a peak of about 95 per cent during 2002 and 2003.

However, it struggled in the face of competition, and in May 2012 it was announced that Google's Chrome overtook Internet Explorer as the most used browser worldwide.

The brand has struggled to shake off the bad reputation of Internet Explorer 6, which was notoriously insecure.

The tech giant is making its case for Windows 10 before an army of software developers who may be crucial allies in its campaign to build enthusiasm among consumers for the next version of Microsoft's flagship operating system, coming later this year.

'Our goal is to make Windows 10 the most attractive development platform ever,' Microsoft executive Terry Myerson told an audience of several thousand programmers and app developers.

While Microsoft has already previewed some aspects of the new Windows, a parade of top executives is using the Build conference to demonstrate more software features and app-building tools, with an emphasis on mobile devices as well as PCs.

Ultimately, they're hoping to win over people who have turned to smartphones and tablets that run on rival operating systems from Google and Apple.

During the three-day conference, Microsoft is also expected to show off new Windows smartphones or other devices and reveal more details about such tech initiatives as the company's new Spartan web browser; its Siri-like digital assistant known as Cortana; and the HoloLens, a futuristic 'augmented reality' headset that projects three-dimensional images in a wearer's field of vision.

But perhaps most importantly, this year's conference is an opportunity for Microsoft to persuade an audience of more than 5,000 techies and independent programmers that it's worth their time to create new apps and programs for Windows 10.

Experts say Microsoft needs a rich variety of apps if it wants to appeal to people who are increasingly using mobile gadgets instead of personal computers.

'Getting developer buy-in is absolutely the crucial thing,' said J.P. Gownder, a tech industry analyst at Forrester Research. He said Microsoft has struggled with a 'chicken-and-egg' problem, in which developers have been reluctant to build mobile apps for Windows because relatively few people use Windows phones and tablets.

Microsoft hopes it has solved that problem by designing Windows 10 so it's easier for developers to build 'universal' apps that work on a variety of Windows devices, from phones to PCs and other gadgets, Gownder said.

Currently, there are more than 1.4 million apps for Android phones and about the same for Apple devices, while there are only a few hundred thousand apps that work on Windows phones and tablets.

The company also has a big carrot to wave in front of those developers: Microsoft has already said it will release Windows 10 as a free upgrade to people who now have PCs or other gadgets running the previous two versions of Windows, provided they upgrade in the coming year.

The offer could create a huge new audience of Windows 10 users in a relatively short time, Gownder said.

Myerson predicted there will be a billion devices using Windows 10 - from PCs to phones, tablets, gaming consoles and even holographic computers - within the next two to three years.

Microsoft has not said exactly when Windows 10 is coming, and some analysts are hoping the company will announce a release date at the conference, along with details about how it will distribute future upgrades.

CEO Satya Nadella and other executives have hinted they'd like to move away from the old notion of selling each new version of Windows as a separate product.

Microsoft's had early success in selling its Office productivity software on a subscription basis, in which customers pay an annual fee to use programs like Word, PowerPoint and Excel.

Nadella is presiding over a major overhaul of a company that once dominated the tech industry, in the days when PCs were king.

He has redesigned some of Microsoft's most popular programs for mobile devices and invested in new 'cloud-computing' services, in which businesses pay to use software that's housed in Microsoft's data centers.

Microsoft still relies heavily on selling traditional software for PCs and corporate computer systems. But its latest quarterly earnings report, issued last week, offered some signs that the decline in that business is slowing, while Microsoft's cloud-computing business is growing rapidly.

It's Official: Windows 10 Will Not Be Free for Pirates

Microsoft executives said Friday that the company will not offer Windows 10 for free to those without legitimate licenses to Microsoft's software, as the company had previously seemed to say.

Terry Myerson, executive vice president of operating systems for Microsoft, wrote Friday that the company will provide very attractive offers to those who wish to upgrade from what he called a Windows operating system in a non-Genuine state to Windows 10. But, he said, it will not be free.

While our free offer to upgrade to Windows 10 will not apply to Non-Genuine Windows devices, and as we've always done, we will continue to offer Windows 10 to customers running devices in a Non-Genuine state, Myerson wrote. In addition, in partnership with some of our valued OEM partners, we are planning very attractive Windows 10 upgrade offers for their customers running one of their older devices in a Non-Genuine state.

If Windows thinks that the software isn't genuine, it will create a watermark on the machine, notifying customers that they're running an illegitimate copy of the software. If that happens, a customer will either need to upgrade or return the machine assuming they just bought it to the manufacturer itself.

Non-Genuine Windows has a high risk of malware, fraud, public exposure of your personal information, and a higher risk for poor performance or

feature malfunctions, Myserson added. Non-Genuine Windows is not supported by Microsoft or a trusted partner.

What this means: This seemingly is the final act on a small drama that began in March, when Microsoft appeared to tell Reuters that it would offer free Windows 10 upgrades even to even those who had pirated the software. Two days later, however, it began walking back on that statement, claiming that pirated copies would be still illegitimate. Now we seem to have the final answer: If you pirate Windows, you ll have to pay eventually.

Peeing Robot Spoils The Fun As Google Temporarily Unplugs Map-editing Tool

Google Maps, how do we screw with thee? Let me count the ways:

We love thee to the depth and breadth and height that our souls can reach, which, in the case of the Android icon urinating on an Apple icon last month, took up just a corner of Pakistan's Ayub National Park.

We also love thee freely... no, scratch that.

We did love you freely - in fact, a little too freely, given that Google's finally, temporarily pulled the plug on its crowdsourcing map-editing service, until it manages to set up moderation that will quash what it says is escalating map vandalism.

Google Map Maker is now showing this message.

Map Maker will be temporarily unavailable for editing starting May 12, 2015. We are terribly sorry for the interruption this outage might cause to your mapping projects. Please bear with us and plan your activities suitably.

That message links to a detailed explanation from Pavithra Kanakarajan and the Google Map Maker team that explains how one recent, "large-scale" prank - the peeing Android is logically the prime suspect here - caused Google to flip the switch.

The full message:

As some of you know already, we have been experiencing escalated attacks to spam Google Maps over the past few months. The most recent incident was particularly troubling and unfortunate - a strong user in our community chose to go and create a large scale prank on the Map. As a consequence, we suspended auto-approval and user moderation across the globe, till we figured out ways to add more intelligent mechanisms to prevent such incidents.

All of our edits are currently going through a manual review process.

We have been analyzing the problem and have made several changes. However, it is becoming clear that fixing some of this is actually going to take longer than a few days. As you can imagine, turning automated and user moderation off has the direct implication of very large backlogs of edits requiring manual review. This in turn means your edits will take a long time to get published.

Given the current state of the system, we have come to the conclusion that it is not fair to any of our users to let them continue to spend time editing. Every edit you make is essentially going to a backlog that is growing very fast. We believe that it is more fair to only say that if we do not have the capacity to review edits at roughly the rate they come in, we have to take a pause.

We have hence decided to temporarily disable editing across all countries starting Tuesday, May 12, 2015, till we have our moderation system back in action. This will be a temporary situation and one that we hope to come out of as soon as possible.

While this is a very difficult, short term decision, we think this will help us get to a better state faster. More importantly, we believe it is simply the right thing to do to all of you, our valued users who continue to edit with the hope that your changes might go live as fast as you've been used to.

Google introduced the online Map Maker tool in 2008 to enable users worldwide to upload new details and points of interest - such as new roads or parks, for example - to Google Maps.

It features tools for roads, railways, buildings, walking trails, bike paths, parks, lakes, and complex road geometry.

Opening up map-making to crowdsourcing has helped Google to fill in the details of its maps, particularly in areas where governments restrict distribution of such data in what are often less-developed regions.

As the Washington Post has reported, the Map Maker community has filled in the blanks on what were formerly uncharted swaths of territories, including details of North Korean territory such as monuments, hotels, hospitals, department stores, Pyongyang's subway stops, and even several city-sized gulags.

Besides this important work, crowdsourcing has also opened up Maps to jokers. Besides the bladder-voiding robot, the growing list of vandalism includes:

A giant cat, stretched 250 meters, from one side of Auckland's Hobson Bay Walkway over to where its head was nearly touching the northwestern section of the trail.

Two pranks that involved exploiting a loophole that allowed you to change a business listing's address after its creation: one where the vandal set up a joke business on the maps service, a snowboarding shop called "Edwards Snow Den", located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue - also known as the White House. The other: a listing for "freddy fazbear pizza", within the building that houses the US Department of the Treasury - presumably an allusion to the Five Nights at Freddy's horror video game in which an animatronic bear roams a pizza parlor after hours, murderously stuffing humans into a Freddy Fazbear suit.

A giant smiley face drawn onto Islamabad.

A Skype logo.

A star and crescent in Pakistan.

How did all these images make it onto the real Google Maps?

The problem lies in Google's approval process, which is based on trust.

Map Maker edits from new users enter a queue for manual approval by "trusted" map makers.

Those trusted map makers earn that ranking by getting a certain number of approved edits under their belts, after which their map edits get auto-approved.

In fact, the user who created what Google says is the most recent incident was, as it said in its statement, "a strong user in our community" who "chose to go and create a large scale prank on the Map."

That means the user likely had auto-approval privileges before suddenly turning into a vandal.

Another recent map edit, just a few miles away from the desperate robot, was the message "Google review policy is crap", carved along with a frowny face into the map, suggesting the renegade user had a point to make.

Google hasn't indicated how long it will take to overhaul the system, but like it said in its official statement, it's certainly going to take more than a few days.

In the meantime, there will be quite a backlog of map edits to wade through.

That will be frustrating, I'm sure, to legitimate map makers.

But hopefully, the drop-off in splattery robots, cartoony cats and other joke images will make up for it.

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